



State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

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**Request for Proposals
Surface Water Improvement Fund Grants
STATEWIDE-12/01/09**

Dear Water Resource Management Partner:

We are pleased to announce that Ohio EPA is soliciting proposals for grants awarded from the newly established **Surface Water Improvement Fund (SWIF)**. Grants up to \$150,000 each will be awarded to various local organizations for the implementation of specific projects that address nonpoint source pollution and/or stormwater runoff and result in water quality improvements in Ohio's streams, rivers and lakes. Grants will be awarded for a two year term—as a result, it is anticipated that most awards will be made for single site-specific projects.

Background: The Surface Water Improvement Fund was created in 2008 with the passage of Ohio House Bill 119 and authorizes the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to provide grant funding to applicants such as local governments, park districts, conservation organizations, and others listed below. During 2010 it is expected that approximately \$1.25 million will be available statewide for Surface Water Improvement Fund grants.

Eligible Applicants: The following entities are eligible to receive grant funding from the Surface Water Improvement Fund:

- Local municipalities, counties and townships
- County park districts
- Soil & water conservation districts
- City and/or county health departments
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation groups with land management responsibilities
- Watershed groups (with local government sponsorship)
- State agencies with land managing responsibilities;
- Recognized land conservancies or trusts.

Eligible Projects: Water quality improvement projects eligible for SWIF grant funding include:

- Stream restoration and renaturalization
- Riparian restoration and protection
- Wetland restoration and protection
- Innovative storm water demonstration

- Inland lake management and restoration
- Highly targeted agricultural BMP demonstration projects
- Replacement or repair of on-site home sewage treatment systems^a

A more detailed listing of sample projects that are eligible for SWIF grant funding is included on page 3 of this Request for Proposals.

Priority Funding: SWIF grants are targeted to Ohio waters where nonpoint source pollution is a significant cause of aquatic life use impairments. Projects that eliminate such impairments and/or that restore impaired waters will score significantly higher in the review process and receive more favorable consideration.

Grants awarded under the SWIF will be done so following a competitive process. Projects demonstrating the following at the time of application will receive more favorable consideration during the review process:

- A readiness to proceed.
- Site specific information or a specifically defined area of focus.
- Appropriate “rights-of-entry” and/or landowner authorization to work on the site
- Consistency with an approved TMDL, endorsed watershed action plan and/or an approved remedial action plan.
- Evidence that successful completion will result in the elimination of impairments, restoration of natural hydrologic conditions, and/or improvement of riparian or in-stream habitat conditions.
- Allowable, appropriate and reasonable project costs.
- Sponsors with the appropriate authority to complete the proposed project.

In addition, Ohio EPA’s director may elect to award SWIF grants for other projects when doing so may result in the elimination of impairments and/or advancement of NPS management capacity.

Grant Amounts: Applicants may request up to \$150,000 in Surface Water Improvement grant funding. However, it is expected that most SWIF grants will be awarded for projects less than \$150,000. There are no local match requirements.

Grant Terms & Requirements: Surface Water Improvement Fund grants will be awarded for a two-year period. Successful applicants will be required to execute a formal grant agreement with Ohio EPA and projects must be completed within the two-year grant year period. *Projects that are “shovel-ready” and will complete all scheduled activities within the first 12-months will receive significantly higher consideration.*

Public Outreach Requirements: All applications for SWIF grants must include project-specific public outreach activities (such as public meetings, project tours, signs,

^a Only County and/or Municipal Health Departments are eligible to apply for and receive SWIF funding for replacement and/or repair of on-site home sewage treatment systems.

newsletters and fact sheets) communicating the successes of the project throughout the community. Costs associated with project-specific public outreach activities are eligible as a cost component of a SWIF grant, but may not exceed 5 percent (5%) of total project costs. *General nonpoint source pollution or environmental education and outreach activities are NOT eligible for SWIF funding.*

Sample Project Listing

A listing of the types of eligible projects for **SWIF** grants funding follows.

Stream Restoration and/or Renaturalization Projects

Ohio EPA is encouraging applications for stream restoration or re-naturalization projects that re-establish in-stream habitat, natural flow conditions and stable morphological conditions. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Natural stream channel restoration where site conditions are appropriate.
- Stream bank stabilization, using materials other than rip-rap.
- Converting traditional drainage ditches to over-wide channels.
- Levee/dike removal or modification to reconnect streams to flood plain areas.
- Lowhead dam removal and/or modification of larger dams
- In-stream habitat restoration
- Other projects that restore natural stream ecology, morphology and flow.

Stream restoration projects will receive a higher score when restored areas are protected with conservation easements and/or other riparian protection measures such as riparian ordinances. Any easements acquired using SWIF funding must be done so consistent with provisions of Ohio Revised Code Section 5301.67(A);

Riparian Restoration and/or Protection Projects

Ohio EPA is also encouraging applications for projects that propose to protect high quality riparian areas along high quality streams and/or to restore impacted riparian areas along impaired streams. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to the following:

- Riparian plantings using native hardwood tree and shrub species
- Riparian wetland restoration
- Invasive species management in riparian forested areas
- Acquisition of riparian conservation easements on high quality streams
- Floodplain renaturalization projects
- Levee/dike removal or modification to reconnect streams to flood plain areas.

Innovative Storm Water Demonstration Projects

Uncontrolled runoff from storm events may be a serious contributor of nonpoint source pollutants to some of Ohio's streams. Many urban areas in Ohio are required to regulate and/or manage storm water flow and do so under stormwater permits issued by Ohio EPA. (SWIF grants may not be used to implement any activities required under stormwater or as mitigation for other permits such as those issued under section 401 of the Clean Water Act). Recent trends in storm water management have identified innovative practices and techniques that are showing increasing promise in the management of storm water. Ohio EPA is interested in promoting these practices by funding local projects that demonstrate these innovative stormwater management practices. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to the following:

- Retrofitting public commons or parking areas with permeable pavements.
- Installing small scale green roofs on public buildings
- Installing bio-filtration islands and/or vegetated retention structures such as large public rain gardens* or large infiltration planting areas.
- Installing passive "treatment trains" combining multiple BMPs such as pocket wetlands, bio-filtration islands and others.
- Constructing storm water treatment wetlands.
- Constructing rainwater harvesting and reuse systems on public buildings or facilities.
- Other practices designed to demonstrate innovative management of storm water flows.

Surface water improvement funding **may not be used for projects such as rain gardens, rain barrels or others conducted on lands owned by private for-profit businesses and/or individual homeowners.*

Wetland Protection, Restoration and/or Renaturalization

Wetland areas play a critical role in effectively filtering nonpoint source pollutants/nutrients. We are particularly interested in funding projects that protect or restore existing wetland areas that are currently being degraded by land uses such as farming, mowing or active development. Eligible wetland projects include but are not limited to the following:

- Restoration of historical wetland areas that have been converted to farmland, parkland and/or other upland uses.
- Replanting of impacted wetland areas using native plants, tree and shrubs species that naturally occur in Ohio.
- Control and management of non-native invasive species in high quality naturally occurring wetland areas.
- Protecting high quality riparian wetland areas through the acquisition of conservation easements and/or other protective measures.

Surface Water Improvement funding may NOT be used for the construction of highly engineered wetlands such as those requiring the use of pumps or other mechanical features.

Inland Lake Management and Restoration

Ohio lakes that are primary recreational areas often show the effects of non-point source pollution entering the lakes through tributaries in the watershed. Lake protection and restoration project grants are available to applicants interested in implementing projects that will measurably improve lake water quality in and around recreation areas. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to the following:

- Lakeshore stabilization BMPs to reduce sediment loadings
- Channel aeration to address anoxic conditions and eliminate fish kills
- Alum treatment demonstration projects designed to inactivate nutrients.
- In-stream alum dosing unit demonstration to reduce tributary nutrient loadings
- Lake water circulators and/or other devices to reduce blue-green algae blooms
- Upstream forebays or constructed wetlands designed to capture incoming pollutants and/or sediment
- Other techniques designed to specifically address identified lake-related recreational, human health, or aquatic health concerns.

Agricultural Best Management Practices and Projects

Agriculture is an identified source of nonpoint source pollutants in Ohio's waters. SWIF grants may be used to improve agricultural practices in localized watersheds through the implementation of best management practices (BMPs) to reduce nonpoint source pollutant loads in rural rivers and streams. The types of projects that are particularly encouraged include but are not limited to the following:

- Nutrient management projects
- Sediment control projects
- Controlled drainage water management
- Livestock exclusion fencing
- Riparian re-vegetation and/or protection
- Other water quality improvement practices

General Limitations for SWIF funded agricultural BMP projects include:

- All grant funded projects must be installed within a single 12-digit (former 14-digit) hydrologic unit code (HUC) subwatershed unit and be consistent with recommendations contained within an approved total maximum daily load study (TMDL) and/or endorsed watershed action plan.
- *Personnel costs may not exceed 10 percent of grant funds requested.*

- *A minimum 25% cost-share of actual costs is required to install agricultural best management practices and projects.*
- *Logjam removal, drainage ditch maintenance and riparian tree removal activities are **NOT** eligible for SWIF funding.*
- *All participating landowners must execute a BMP operation and maintenance agreement with the grant sponsor agreeing to maintain the installed practice for the “useful life of the practice”.*

Riparian and Wetland Conservation Easement Projects

Riparian and wetland protection projects are valuable for protecting existing high quality streams from potential NPS pollution threats. Riparian protection projects should focus on protecting high quality riparian forested areas and/or existing high quality riparian wetland areas. Candidate streams include those that are currently attaining their designated aquatic life use but may be threatened by nonpoint source pollution resulting from urbanization, development or other land uses such as agriculture.

The only type of riparian protection project that is eligible for SWIF grant funding is the acquisition of conservation easements on high quality riparian forested and/or wetland areas.

All conservation easements must be acquired consistent with the provisions of Ohio Revised Code Section 5301.67(A). Any conservation easements and/or land purchases may only be completed following an appraisal by a certified land appraiser and may not exceed lesser of the appraised value or \$25,000/acre. Reasonable and customary fees associated with the completion of an appraisal may be covered using SWIF grant funds.

Replacement or Repair of on-site Home Sewage Treatment Systems

Failing on-site home sewage treatment systems have been identified in several watersheds as a major contributor of nonpoint source pollutants. SWIF grants are available for local health departments for the repair and/or replacement of failing on-site home sewage treatment systems identified as a cause of watershed impairment in either an approved TMDL study and/or a state endorsed watershed action plan. Replacement of failing systems is done on a cost-share basis. No more than 75% of the total costs (to \$10,000/unit whichever is less) for replacing an HSTS system may be paid by grant funds. Applicants will score higher when they demonstrate that funding will be focused in areas immediately adjacent to streams where failing on-site home sewage treatment systems have been identified as a cause of impairment or on streams where recreational use is high. The types of activities eligible for SWIF grants include the following:

- Repair of traditional on-site home sewage treatment systems that have been identified as failing through inspection by local health department personnel.

- Replacement of traditional on-site home sewage treatment systems using cost-share funding of no more than 75% (up to \$10,000) of the total costs for replacement.
- Repair of alternative on-site home sewage treatment systems (such as mound units and others) that have been identified as failing through inspection by local health department personnel.
- Replacement of alternative on-site home sewage treatment systems (such as mound systems and others) using cost-share funding of no more than 75% (up to \$15,000) of the total costs for replacement.

Ineligible Projects: The following activities are not eligible for SWIF grants:

1. Acid Mine Drainage abatement and Abandoned Mine Land reclamation;
2. Logjam removal projects and/or drainage ditch maintenance or management;
3. Projects required under enforcement order or an enforcement-required supplemental enforcement project, or required as mitigation under regulatory programs such as Section 401 permits, NPDES permits or Permits to Install.
4. Any project that is part of an approved nutrient trading program;
5. Projects that propose the construction of dikes or levees within a floodplain;
6. Projects that propose nutrient management or agricultural run-off control from regulated livestock feeding operations.
7. Incentive payments for programs such as Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and/or bonus payments for the adoption of certain long-term conservation practices under CRP, CREP or EQIP;
8. Projects that propose best management practices (BMPs) or “end-of-pipe treatments” which are either required or anticipated to be required under an NPDES permit or a Permit to Install;
9. Projects required under Phase 1 or Phase 2 NPDES storm water compliance efforts;
10. Research or monitoring activities;
11. Projects that replace and/or expand an existing EQIP (or other farm-bill funded) initiative within the same subwatershed for which a grant project is proposed; or
12. Projects that propose conservation tillage and/or other agricultural equipment purchases.

Application Deadline & Review Procedures

The deadline for submitting **SWIF** grant applications is close of business **February 15, 2010**. Applications **must** be complete and postmarked by the above date to be considered for funding. Applications postmarked (or hand-delivered) after this date will be returned to the applicant without further consideration.

Please submit **three** (3) copies of the complete application with **original (blue ink)** signatures and **one** (1) copy of the application in **Microsoft Word** format on a CD. Completed applications may be mailed or delivered to:

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Division of Surface Water
Attn: Russ Gibson, NPS Program Manager
50 W.Town St., Ste 700
Columbus, OH 43216-1049

Upon receipt, all **SWIF** grant applications will be reviewed for completeness, technical merit and adherence to the **SWIF** grant RFP criteria. Applications found to be administratively complete will undergo a comprehensive review using criteria designed to evaluate and score the following:

- Environmental results likely to be achieved;
- Status of TMDL report and/or local watershed planning efforts;
- Overall effectiveness of the project;
- Feasibility of completing the proposed project in a timely manner;
- Applicant's capability to administer state grant funds;
- Project's readiness to proceed;
- The project includes a site specific location;
- The long term benefits of the project;
- The cost effectiveness of the project; and
- Existing environmental quality and restorability of the watershed.
- Project specific educational and outreach activities;

In addition to the above general criteria that are applicable to all applicants, projects also will be evaluated using specific technical criteria developed for the specific type of proposed project.

Upon completion of all reviews, applications will be ranked according to their review scores and recommendations for funding will be developed based upon this ranking. Funding decisions will be made by the Director of Ohio EPA. We anticipate that grant awards will likely be announced between May and June 2010. Successful applicants will be required to execute a formal grant agreement and adhere to all requirements of the **SWIF** grants program.

Application Materials and Technical Assistance

Applications are available at the Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water (DSW) homepage located at www.epa.ohio.gov/dsw/nps/index.aspx. Applications are available at Ohio EPA's district offices. A list of Ohio EPA District Offices and respective nonpoint source environmental specialists is located in **Attachment 1** of this RFP.

We appreciate your interest in the **SWIF** grants and look forward to working with you to help Ohio meet important water quality goals. If after reviewing this information you require additional assistance or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact the district NPS environmental specialist in your area.

Sincerely,

George Elmaraghy, P.E., Chief
Division of Surface Water

GAE/rg/eab
Attachments

Surface Water Improvement Fund RFP - Attachment 1



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